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ABSTRACT

Reading social studies content presents situations in which selected pupils have not been as successful in learning as they might have been. Fast learners may find the content exceptionally easy to read, thus learning does not become the challenge it should be. Slow learners may find the content too difficult to comprehend. There are a variety of informal and formal ways for teachers to determine the reading levels of their pupils. The classroom teacher needs to think of diverse ways to help students achieve as much as their capabilities permit. Too frequently, teachers emphasize obtaining facts in reading content in the social studies. However, students need to move to more complex levels of cognition. For each unit in social studies, an adequate supply of books should be available for pupil choice at a reading center. Early primary grade pupils can have interesting, realistic experiences through the taking of excursions with teacher leadership. Teachers should think of various approaches that can be used to help slow learners and gifted and talented learners achieve to their optimum in the area of reading in the social studies. Many mistakes have been made in teaching by having pupils develop an excessive number of written reports using encyclopedias to obtain background information. (RS)

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MARLOW EDIGER

# READING IN THE SOCIAL STUDIES

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Reading social studies content presents situations in which selected pupils have not been as successful in learning as they might have been. Learners should feel successful in their achievement to develop an adequate self-concept. The underachiever who does not work up to his or her capabilities, no doubt, has an inadequate self-image. A learner who feels that he or she cannot achieve well ultimately might become an underachiever. Pupils can be underachievers if they are slow, average, or fast learners. These learners are not working up to their potential if underachievement is taking place.

Too frequently, all pupils in a heterogeneously grouped classroom are reading from the same page at the same time from their social studies textbook. Generally, social studies textbooks for a given grade level are written for average learners who are achieving up to their capacity. Fast learners may find the content exceptionally easy to read, thus learning does not become the challenge it should be. Slow learners may find the content too difficult to comprehend. Thus, discouragement in learning results in feelings of failure for these children. It would be excellent if social studies textbooks for each grade level would have the same content written on three reading levels to meet the needs of fast, average, and slow readers. The illustrations in the textbook for these three reading levels could be the same; the ideas expressed within the three reading levels would be as similar as

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possible. This would not be a perfect solution involving the problem of providing for different reading levels in a classroom, but it would assist in helping each pupil gain as much as possible from reading content in reputable social studies textbooks.

Another solution to the problem of providing for different reading levels in a given grade level in social studies is to use books that are on the reading level of each pupil reagardless of grade level. Ideally, of course, any book that a child is asked to read from should be on his or her reading level; otherwise, frustration sets in and a dislike for learning may result. The grade level concept is mentioned here merely for the identification of groups or classes of pupils being referred to. Otherwise, grade levels may have very little to do with identifying pupils in terms of achievement levels. Teachers are familiar with selected third graders who read better than specific fifth and sixth grade pupils. Some second grade pupils may read better than selected third and fourth graders. In many cases, older pupils read better than younger pupils due to having had more opportunities to learn to read. When utilizing lower grade level social studies texts than the grade level the child is in presently, there may, in many cases, be problems in having content within the text which would relate to the ongoing unit being studied. For example, if pupils are studying a unit on Australia on the fifth grade level, there may not be a social studies textbook with unit content on Australia in lower grade levels which would meet the reading needs of a child with less than average capabilities.

If an elementary school has a fairly large enrollment so that there are approximately three or more classrooms of pupils in a particular

grade, children could be grouped homogeneously. The range of achievement would be less within a classroom as compared to heterogeneous grouping. Pupils who are slow learners would then be placed in a class whose achievement levels in reading would be as comparable as possible. This would be true of average achievers as well as fast learners in reading. The fast learners in a class could achieve at a more rapid rate as compared to the other achievement levels when reading content from a social studies textbook. Advantages and disadvantages can be listed for any plan of grouping, such as in homogeneously grouped talented and gifted pupils may not have adequate chances to learn from average achievers as well as slow learners. In society, individuals interact with each other where diverse achievement and capacity levels exist. A disadvantage of heterogeneous grouping, as was stated previously, is that the teacher must provide for a broader range of acheivement levels as compared to homogeneous grouping. The needs of gifted and talented pupils may then not be met.

1. Determining Reading Levels of Pupils

There are several ways to assist the social studies teacher in determining the instructional level of reading for each pupil. An informal method may be used. Here, the teacher would have a pupil read orally, approximately, one hundred running words from the beginning of the social studies textbook. The child has not practiced reading this previously. He/she should be able to read correctly as a minimum about ninety-five words. Perhaps, the maximum number of words a child should be able to read correctly would be ninety-eight out of the hundred running words. In revealing comprehension on the material read, the

pupil should be able to answer about three out of four questions asked by the teacher. There is a problem involved here in determining which questions the teacher should select to ask pupils for assessing comprehension. The above values relating to oral pronunciation of words as well as comprehension are approximate. The informal method of determining reading levels of children should be given at the beginning of a school year. Supposing a pupil reads correctly 50 percent of the words read orally to the teacher the chances are comprehension will suffer greatly when struggling over word pronunciation. In a situation such as this, a child cannot benefit much from reading content from a social studies textbook written for his/her grade level. If a pupil without previous practice can consistently read 100 running words correctly from the social studies textbook and answer all questions correctly, the chances are this learning activity is not as challenging as it could be. There is no room for this child to learn to identify new words since he/she knows all the words read form selections without any previous practice. This situation could be excellent for the learner if new learnings in social studies are being developed meaningfully by reading trade books. The informal methods of helping to evaluate the reading level of each child are, of course, not a panacea. It is an approach that can be used along with other techniques.

Hennings[1] wrote:

> In administering an informal reading inventory, the teacher asks the child to read orally a series of passages of varying

[1] Dorothy Grant Hennings. Communication in Action: Teaching the Language Arts. Fourth edition. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1990, page 449.

> difficulty, generally starting with one that the teacher believes the child can read with ease and working up to passages of greater difficulty. Before the child reads each selection, the teacher suggests a reason for reading (Read to find...) and follows oral reading with questions that check comprehension. During the child's reading the teacher marks on his or her copy of the passages where the student omitted, added, or substituted words; where the student hesitated or repeated; where the teacher had to supply the word; and where the child went back to self-correct. Through systematic analysis of a child's comprehension and decoding errors, the teacher can determine the child's instructional and independent reading levels. Typically, the independent reading level is considered that at which a reader scores at 98 percent or above on vocabulary and 90 percent or above on comprehension.

Reputable standardized tests results could also be utilized in helping to determine reading levels of individual pupils. These tests must have high reliability and validity. The social studies teacher should continuously evaluate reading materials in making decisions about learning activities which are profitable for pupils. Use of standardized test results alone in determining reading levels of pupils is not adequate.

Harris and Sipay [2] wrote:

> Dolch (1953) suggested a quick way to use a basal reader to locate the poor readers in a class. His procedure involves having the children take turns reading a sentence as fast as they can. "Then several things may happen. First, some child may refuse to read. The teacher will cheerfully say,'All right. Next one read on.' Or a child will read with great hesitation and difficulty. To him the teacher will instantly supply any word that stops him, say 'Good,' and go on. Since each reads but one sentence, there will be little embarrassment."
>
> One sentence is a very brief and unreliable sample from which to attempt to evaluate a child's reading, even in such a

[2] Albert J. Harris & Edward R. Sipay. How to Increase Reading Ability. Eighth edition. New York: Longman Inc., 1985, p. 172.

rough, preliminary way. We would prefer to have each child read two or three sentences; in other respects, this Dolch procedure seems practical and effective as a quick screening test. Since it does not include any check on comprehension, it can disclose only one side of the reading picture.

2. Helping Pupils Benefit from Social Studies Textbooks

It is important to give very careful consideration to selecting elementary school social studies textbooks for pupils. Ragan and McAulay[3] suggest the following criteria when evaluating social studies textbooks:

Authorship

1. Is the author a recognized scholar in the field?
2. Does he use appropriate technical vocabulary?
3. Has he had teaching experience?
4. Does he make use of pertinent research findings?
5. Is his style of writing appropriate for pupils of this age?

Mechanical Features

1. Does the book have a durable, waterproof binding?
2. Does it have enough illustrations?
3. Are the illustrations clear and related to topics discussed?
4. Is the size of the type appropriate for pupils who use the book?
5. Is the color, texture, and quality of paper appropriate?
6. Does the cost of the book compare favorably with others offered?

Contents

1. Have materials been selected in view of their social significance?
2. Do the materials present sufficient details to make them meaningful?
3. Does the text point out practical application to life situations?
4. Is information adequately documented?
5. Does the organization and presentation recognize sound principles of learning?

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[3] William B. Ragan and John D. McAulay. Social Studies for Today's Children. New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, 1964, pp. 263-264.

Helps for Teachers and Pupils

1. Is a teacher's manual available?
2. Does the manual reflect an understanding of modern teaching procedures?
3. Are study helps for pupils provided?
4. Does the text contain adequate summaries and previews?
5. Are table of contents, index, and glossary adequate?
6. Is problem-solving emphasized in the text?

The classroom teacher needs to think of a variety of ways to utilize in helping pupils achieve as much as their capabilities permit from reading content from a social studies textbook. It must be realized that a social studies textbook is one learning activity among many others that pupils can benefit from. A few traditional teachers of social studies still use a social studies textbook for the majority of learning activities provided for pupils. These teachers should realize that pupils have different learning styles and achievement levels; thus variety in the kinds of materials and methods used in teaching pupils is important.

The social studies teacher must assist pupils in identifying new words they will meet in print. It is frustrating for pupils to read content in the social studies when words are not recognized as to their pronunciation. The child thus cannot attach meaning to words viewed; as a result comprehension suffers. If a pupil prior to reading a given selection can see new words in manuscript print written clearly and accurately on the chalkboard or on a transparency when using the overhead projector with the correct pronunciation being attached to these words, this should assist the learner to comprehend what he/she is reading. To vary the procedure, the new words could also be printed on cards which are clearly visible to all involved in this learning

activity. A lack of interest and boredom will set in on the part of learners if the teacher feels that there are only a few tried and true methods to help pupils recognize new words in print.

Along with guiding pupils in identifying new words in print, the teacher should also assist pupils to understand the meaning or meanings of these words. Related pictures from the teacher's file and pictures from the textbook used in a class discussion can do much to help pupils associate meanings or definitions with vocabulary terms. Pupils who see several pictures of different colonies in colonial America and discuss their observations, no doubt, will understand the concept of "colony" or "colonies" better than those pupils who merely read about that concept. It is excellent to use a filmstrip and/or film also in helping pupils further develop the concept of "colony" or "colonies." The teacher must evaluate when an adequate number of learning activities has been provided for pupils to understand vocabulary terms and concepts to be met in print by the reader of content in the social studies.

Certain vocabulary terms and concepts are concrete in meaning, whereas others are more abstract and, therefore, more difficult to understand. A pupil seeing actual animals as well as viewing pictures, slides, filmstrips, and films on different kinds of animal life should find it relatively easy to attach meaning to the concept of "animal" or "animals." Concepts such as "socialism," "communism," and "capitalism" are highly abstract as compared to the concept of "animal" or "animals." A pupil can see and experience animals directly. In the case of abstract concepts, meanings are developed by pupils in an indirect way. A child cannot see "cooperation"; he/she can see a "dog." Meanings

attached to an abstract concept such as "cooperation" must come through inferences made about certain situations such as pupils working harmoniously within a committee. Definite guidelines are followed when pupils exhibit characteristics of "cooperation."

Adequate background information needs to become a part of the learner prior to reading content from a social studies textbook. Pupils may have difficulty in attaching meaning to content being read due to having inadequate knowledge or not possessing readiness for understanding the content to be read. Several approaches may be utilized by the teacher in guiding pupils to secure adequate background knowledge so that meaningful learnings can be developed by pupils through reading content from reputable social studies textbooks. The teacher may assist pupils to raise important questions relating to pictures in their books. These pictures would pertain directly to content which pupils are to read. Pupils who are to read content on different countries of North Africa may need a considerable amount of background information on the Moslem religion before they can understand the ideas they will be reading about. Discussion of pictures in the textbook relating to mosques, minarets, Mecca, Ramadan, and pilgrimages may assist pupils in obtaining necessary readiness to understand new ideas being developed from reading the social studies text. If pupils need additional readiness activities, previously mentioned learning activities, such as the use of appropriate films, slides, filmstrips, and pictures from the teacher's own file, can be provided for pupils. The teacher of social studies must evaluate as to the number and

sequence of learning activities which are necessary for learners to develop readiness for reading in the social studies.

It is very important that pupils have established a clear purpose for the reading of social studies content. Ideally, the purpose or purposes should come from pupils. Through the viewing of pictures, a film, a filmstrip, and/or slides on the Moslem religion, pupils may have become stimulated to ask the following questions:

1. Why do Moslems face Mecca when praying?
2. How is Ramadan celebrated in the Moslem world?
3. Why are mosques and minarets important?

Answers to these questions may be obtained through reading. It may be necessary to use other reference sources than the textbook to answer selected questions that pupils have raised. If the textbook supplies answers to pupils' questions, comparisons may be made of information gathered by using other reliable references.

## Purposes in Reading Content in the Social Studies

Too frequently, teachers emphasize one purpose largely in reading content in the social studies and that being reading to obtain facts. It is important for pupils to obtain and understand facts. Facts supply raw material for thinking. However, pupils also need to move to more complex levels of cognition.

Facts that pupils are to gain should be significant. Teachers have wasted much time in teaching by emphasizing that pupils recall unimportant ideas. Facts that pupils learn should ideally be relevant now as well as in the future. Important facts that pupils learn must be

meaningful. Much forgetting by pupils can occur if facts are memorized without being understood as to their meaning. The teacher must find diverse methods of guiding pupils to acquire important facts. Interest will be lost by pupils in learning if the teacher merely questions pupils over factual content read from a social studies textbook each day. The creative teacher continually finds new ways for pupils to acquire facts as well as to engage in learning activities involving more complex patterns of thinking. Perhap, there is no quicker way for a pupil to lose interest in learning than being drilled on the learning of factual knowledge.

Burns and Broman[4] wrote:

> Literature has a very special place in the language arts program since it provides outlets and challenges for children's reading, speaking, and writing, thus enhancing appreciation of their cultural heritage of fine writing. Experiences with literature can expand vocabulary, stimulate the imagination, provide the sensitivity and stimulus for writing, whet the appetite for further reading, and provoke critical thinking about the world in which we live.
>
> Although literature is a major integrating experience in the elementary school language arts program, it also has value of its own. It provides new perspectives through vicarious experiences, develops insight into human behavior and wisdom, and provides beauty and inspiration.
>
> A good literature program expands students' knowledge of their literary heritage, establishes skills of literary analysis, fosters language skills, enriches content of the curriculum, and stimulates creative activities. The major goal, however, is to promote the experiencing and enjoyment of literature as a means of developing children's reading tastes and lifetime appreciation of the reading materials.

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[4] Paul C. Burns and Betty Broman. The Language Arts in Childhood Education. Fifth edition. Boston: Houghton Miflfin Company, 1983, page 382.

A second purpose involves pupils reading to follow directions. In the making of relief maps, pupils need to read and follow directions carefully so that the end product will turn out well. Pupils need to read directions carefully so that exercises in workbooks and from social studies texts are completed accurately. The frozen food industry has increased the necessity for being able to read directions accurately. Not following these directions carefully may make for a poor final product as far as food preparation is concerned. The reader who can read directions carefully from a frozen food package can prepare excellent dishes, such as brussel sprouts, and yet have no knowledge basically of cooking. Many other products that can be purchased such as cake mixes also require the skill of reading to follow directions. Reading to follow directions has become an important skill in American society as well as in the social studies program in the elementary school.

A third purpose in reading is to follow a sequence of events or ideas. It is important for pupils to think in terms of chronological order when reading content pertaining to history in the social studies. Pupils should understand that the age of discovery came before the age of colonization. Or, the age of colonization as an event came before the beginning of a new nation. As pupils read content from the social studies textbook, it may be a wise teaching procedure for them to develop a time line. Pupils with teacher assistance can draw pictures for the time line relating to specific events in history as they are being studied. Immediately below these pictures, the date of each event can be written. Pupils associate the happening with the year that the

event transpired. Memorization of dates pertaining to these happenings should not be forced upon pupils. They may desire to remember the dates of specific happenings as a result of rich learning experiences. The time line would be a device to help pupils think in terms of sequence in events when reading related content from a social studies textbook. Reading for a sequence of ideas is also necessary, among other ways, when pupils read about specific steps involved in sending a letter such as writing a letter and addressing an envelope, putting it in a mailbox, sorting letters in a post office, and placing the letter at the disposal of the receiver.

A very important purpose in reading in the social studies is to have pupils read critically. This is not an easy type of reading content since it goes beyond recalling what has been read. In a democracy much freedom exists to write and publish ideas. Therefore, it is important for pupils to evaluate carefully what has been read. Too often, a reader may accept as fact the ideas contained in an editorial. Generally, one point of view is presented in an editorial. Pupils should be guided to consider alternative points of view also. In a section on letters that have been written to the editor of a newspaper or magazine, a point of view may be given in solving the Middle East conflict as well as in minimizing different kinds of pollution. Again, pupils should be assisted in evaluating the point of view stated with other alternatives or possiblities. If individuals and nations could view each problem situation from several perspectives in arriving at appropriate solutions, fewer disagreements, frustrations, and wars would, no doubt, result. In the area of critical reading, pupils should

evaluate statements as to their being fact or opinion, and reality or fantasy. Statements of fact can be verified by using reputable reference sources. If pupils read that a specific capital city of a country or nation is beautiful in appearance, this would be an opinion that the writer is presenting. In capital cities of different nations of the world, there are scenes within a city that are beautiful and others that lack appeal. The perception of individuals varies as to which cities, in degrees, are beautiful and which lack this quality. If a writer states that Paris is the capital city of France, a fact has been stated since this can be verified by checking with reputable reference sources.

Pupils in the elementary school ultimately need to become more proficient in separating fantasy from reality. There are excellent imaginary books written for pupils on space travel; other library books on this topic deal with reality. It is excellent for pupils to read both kinds or types of books. However, pupils should learn to appraise content in terms of real situations in life versus situations where the imagination of individuals is used. Critical thinking is then involved.

Harris and Sipay[5] wrote:

> An important kind of critical reading involves comparison of two or more sources of information. Children are usually amazed when they first find two authorities contradicting each other. An experience like that can serve as a preliminary to discussion of such questions as the reputation and prestige of each author, his impartiality or bias, the comparative recency of the two sources, and so on. Reading experiences of this sort develop naturally when children do wide reading to find

[5] Albert J. Harris and Edward R. Sipay. How to Increase Reading Ability. White Plains, N.Y.: Longman Inc., 1985, page 504.

> data on a problem. The teacher should be alert and should make use of such occasions as stepping stones toward a more mature attitude on the credibility of reading matter. In the study of current events, comparison of the treatment of an event by two newspapers or magazines of opposing points of view can form an effective point of departure. A second kind of critical reading involves considering new ideas or information in the light of one's previous knowledge and beliefs. The thoughtful reader asks himself, Is it reasonable? Is it possible? He does not, of course, automatically reject the unfamiliar idea or challenging conclusion. But he becomes doubly alert when he finds disagreements with what he has previously accepted as true.

Pupils also need to realize as a purpose in reading the developing of generalizations. If pupils are reading social studies content on colonization in the New World, they may develop a generalization that one reason Puritans came to the New World was to obtain religious freedom. Each generalization that pupils develop can be checked as to accuracy by specific facts. With the explosion of knowledge as a factor in American society due to the many reading materials available for consumers, it is more important than ever before to have pupils develop important generalizations. An excessive number of unrelated facts that pupils are attempting to acquire may provide for situations where a low rate of retention results. However, pupils who attach meaning to important facts which support major generalizations, no doubt, will retain a relatively high degree of learnings obtained.

A further purpose in reading involves creative reading. Pupils should be stimulated to think in terms of different interpretations for a particular selection of social studies content that has been read. The teacher should praise pupils for unique contributions made. Thus, more effort will be put forth in creative endeavors by pupils when a classrom or school environment is supporting of this kind of behavior.

Pupils who can feel and think like people living in a clearing along the Amazon will benefit more from their reading as compared to pupils who are unable to put themselves into situations in life that others are facing.

Pupils can also be guided to think of unique solutions to problems that individuals faced in past times as well as present times. What would they have done, for example, to have avoided the war of 1812? Or, supposing that an event had not occurred in history such as World War I, what would life be like today in the United States? Pupils should notice variety in contributions that are made by classmates in an atmosphere of respect and appreciation for creative ideas presented.

Pupils also need to develop appropriate skills to skim social studies content when this becomes an important purpose. Too frequently pupils try to read all content in the social studies at the same rate of speed. A rather rapid type of reading exists when skimming becomes the major purpose at a given time. Teachers of social studies need to emphasize a variety of purposes when pupils engage in reading activities. It certainly would not provide pupils with aequate means of comprehending ideas read if reading for facts only was emphasized, and/or skimming of content was emphasized excessively. There are important names, dates, and places that pupils need to locate on a page or several pages in a given book. In skimming content pupils do not need to read every word on the page or pages to obtain the needed bits of information. Names of people and places, as one clue, will start with capital letters; dates are represented by numerals. Important information should be found by pupils when skimming becomes a purpose in

reading. If pupils are looking up an entry in the index section of a book, it would be ridiculous and time consuming to start with the beginning of the index section in reading and read to where the proper entry exists. A child who develops proficiency in using the index will soon find the proper entry by having mastered the letters of the alphabet and knowing how words are alphabetized. He/she will be able to decide upon other titles for an entry if no listing is found for the original topic being pursued.

A good researcher will also become skilled in using the table of contents to locate information. Not every word, of course, is read when using the table of contents. Elementary school pupils on their developmental level can learn to skim content in the table of contents to find necessary information.

Rubin[6] had the following to say regarding skimming:

> Setting purposes for reading is a crucial factor in reading. Students need to learn that they read for different purposes. If they are reading for pleasure, they may either read quickly or slowly based on the way they feel. If they are studying or reading information that is new to them, they will probably read very slowly. If, however, they are looking up a telephone number, a name, a date, or looking over a paragraph for its topic, they will read much more rapidly. Reading rapidly to find or locate information is called skimming. All skimming involves fast reading; however, there are different kinds of skimming. Skimming for a number, a date, or name can usually be done much more quickly than skimming for the topic of a paragraph or to answer specific question. (Some persons call the most rapid reading scanning and the less rapid reading skimming.) Teachers should help students recognize that they read rapidly to locate some specific information, but that once they have located what they want, they may read the surrounding information more slowly.

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[6] Dorothy Rubin. Teaching Reading and Study Skills in Content Areas. New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1983, pages 109-110.

interesting bulletin board display may also attract interests of pupils in the reading of library books related to the specific unit being studied. A committee of pupils could share ideas they have obtained from the reading of library books. If each pupil has developed proficiency in the sharing of ideas in a committee, new interests in reading could be developed by listeners. The listeners may want to read the same book another pupil has read due to the sharing of ideas from children's literature in a group session. Pupils should have opportunities to read books pertaining to their own present interests as well as to develop new interests. The teacher of social studies should study pupils in determining which approaches to utilize in helping each child consume more reading materials to enrich learnings in the social studies.

One of the weaknesses in utilizing library books in elementary school social studies is that an inadequate system of evaluating pupil achievement has been in evidence. The teacher definitely does not want to hinder pupil achievement in the reading of library books relating to the social studies through the use of evaluation techniques which tend to destroy pupil interest in this learning activity.

One approach that may be utilized to evaluate pupil achievement in reading library books which directly relate to the social studies unit being taught would be to have learners volunteer for individual conferences with the teacher after having completed the reading of a book. The teacher could also require conferences with pupils after they have completed the reading of a library book. The teacher would need to have adequate knowledge of ideas contained in the library books. The

## Individualized Reading in the Social Studies

For each unit in social studies, an adequate supply of books should be available for pupil choice at a reading center. These library books should be on a variety of reading levels for the unit presently being studied. In a fourth grade classroom, the reading levels in a heterogeneously grouped classrom may vary from the second grade or lower to the sixth grade or higher. The teacher needs to be aware of the different reading achievement levels within a specific class of pupils, and thus make adequate provisions for these differences.

In addition to pupils reading on different levels of achievement, differences also exist in the area of speed of reading. Comprehension of content on the pupil's part, however, must receive priority. Reading activities have values for pupils only if comprehension is at an acceptable level. Problems pertaining to speed in reading are usually resolved with appropriate comprehension being realized by learners.

When reading library books, pupils vary in interests possessed. For example, if a specific unit pertaining to a particular nation in social studies is being studied by puils, a child or several pupils may be interested in reading about manufacturing while a different child or group may be interested in reading about farming or agriculture. Many library books generally are available today relating directly to each specific unit being studied.

It is excellent if the teacher introduces selected library books by telling a few interesting happenings about these books which would stimulate pupils in having an inward desire to do more reading. An

content from the card file could be used by the teacher when having conferences with pupils. The teacher in conference situations with children should soon develop extensive knowledge of pupils' library books related to different units taught in elementary school social studies.

During the time a conference is held, the teacher should stimulate pupil thinking with challenging and interesting questions. The conference should assist pupils in wanting to read more library books voluntarily. The conference definitely should not hinder pupils in wanting to do more reading in the social studies. The teacher could record information after each conference has been completed relating to items such as the following: the child's enthusiasm for reading library books; comprehension of important ideas read; and proficiency in reading for a variety of purposes.

Pupils' achievement in reading library books may also be evaluated in small discussion groups. Each child could briefly tell of major conclusions reached in the reading activity involving library books. Other pupils in the small group could ask questions of the speaker. In this situation, pupils may reveal the quantity and quality of ideas gained from reading. Tiedt[7] wrote:

> Other teachers are finding that the purchase of multiple copies of several titles provides excellent material for small group approaches to literature study. This approach to literature study limits student selection but offers certain advantages for the teaching of literature: (1) use of seminar techniques in discussing a common body of reading,

[7] Iris M. Tiedt. The Language Arts Handbook. Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1983, page 314.

> (2) concentration of teacher and student efforts on fewer books to be examined in depth, (3) individualized responses to independent open-ended activities for extending learning, and (4) experiences in group dynamics.
>
> Perhaps the best method of presentation will prove to be a combination of the individualized and the small group approaches described. Neither approach actually teaches literature, for the success of these techniques lies essentially with the teacher. Teacher enthusiasm, knowledge of literature, ability to guide without domination, and wisdom in planning will, as in all of teaching, play a significant role.

Pupils may also share ideas obtained from reading library books when the class as a whole is pursuing ongoing learning activities. The child can relate ideas gained from reading to specific scenes and situations presented in films, filmstrips, slides, transparencies, and other ongoing learning activities. The teacher may evaluate the quality of the related ideas.

## The Experience Chart

Early primary grade pupils can have interesting, realistic experiences through the taking of excursions with teacher leadership. Depending upon the unit being taught, an excursion could be taken to a farm, dairy, fire station, zoo, or museum. After the excursion has been completed, pupils may present ideas to the teacher about their experiences. The teacher writes ideas given by learners on the chalkboard using neat manuscript letters large enough for all to see. The recorded experience may be four to ten lines in length depending upon the developmental level of the child. Pictures may be drawn or collected and placed above the recorded written experience. Pupils with teacher aid could read individually or collectively what has been

written. In this learning activity, pupils had a lifelike experience which was the field trip. The experience was recorded. Pupils then engaged in reading what had been written. Thus, early primary grade pupils were reading content in the social studies.

Too frequently, it is assumed that experience charts in the area of social studies would be used only with early primary grade pupils in reading readiness programs. Throughout the elementary school years, pupils can develop experience charts. Once a pupil has developed his or her own writing vocabulary so that ideas can be expressed effectively on paper, the involved learners should develop their own experience charts. For example, intermediate grade pupils having visited an assembly line can record their own experiences in writing. This learning activity should not be used excessively; it should be used along with other experiences.

Excursions are not the only basis for writing experience charts. Experience charts can also be developed based on learning activities such as the following: viewing a filmstrip, transparencies, films or slides; listening to a resource person; and engaging in construction activities related to a specific unit being studied.

## Helping the Slow Learner

Teachers should think of various approaches that can be used to help slow learners achieve to their optimum in the area of reading in the social studies. Pupils differ from each other in the kinds of learning activities which are of maximum benefit to them. Slow learners should have ample opportunities to learn from various learning activies

other than reading. These pupils can learn much from pictures, films, filmstrips, slides, tapes, and records that are on their understanding level. Too frequently, reading activities in the social studies have been frustrating since the materials utilized were excessively difficult. Reading materials should be on the instructional level of pupils so that meaningful learnings may be developed. With teacher guidance, self-selection of library books related to social studies units being taught may help slow learners achieve to their highest development possible.

If the social studies textbook used with specific units in social studies is too difficult for certain pupils to comprehend when reading, the content may be simplified by shortening the length of sentences as well as using easier terminology. No doubt, some sentences can be omitted when content is rewritten by the teacher. It is important to keep the ideas as much as possible similar to the intentions of the author of the textbook. This can be a time-consuming activity for social studies teachers, but it definitely should pay dividends in aiding slow learners to achieve in reading. When slow learners read the rewritten selections, the teacher needs to utilize feedback from the learner to determine if further revisions are necessary.

Also, the teacher or a good reader may read content orally in the social studies textbok to slow learners. An atmosphere of respect must exist among all pupils in a classroom regardless of achievement levels. Labels should not be attached to slow learners.

When the teacher or a good reader reads orally to slow learners, the purpose is to have these pupils gain as many important

understandings as possible. They can follow along in their own textbooks as the oral reading activity progresses. Purpose within the learner for the reading activity should be developed through such activities as discussing pictures related to the content which will be read and discussing appropriate meanings for new words. Readiness activities should be varied to provide for individual differences as well as different learning styles.

When slow learners in reading have listened to social studies content being read to them orally, a related experience chart may be developed. Ideas for the experience chart should come from involved learners. The learners may then see that their own ides can be coded in written form. Pictures may be drawn on each experience chart to clarify ideas expressed. Illustrations for the experience chart may also come from pictures that slow learners have collected. After the experience chart has been completed, the involved group may read the selections together with teacher guidance. A few readers may want to write up their own ideas gained from the oral reading completed by an able reader. Of utmost importance is that all learners in a class benefit optimally from ongoing learning activities. Reading materials need to be adjusted to the level of understanding on the part of each pupil. If the social studies textbook contains material that is too difficult to comprehend for a given set of learners within a class, or textbooks related to a specific unit cannot be found which are on the reading levels of selected pupils, the teacher of social studies needs to think of alternative learning activities which are satisfying, meaningful, and purposeful for these learners in an atmosphere of respect.

Barr and Sadow[9] wrote the following concerning reading comprehension:

> An assessment of reading comprehension serves a twofold purpose. It enables the teacher to make an informed decision regarding the level of materials that would be appropriate for instruction, and it alerts the teacher to a student's specific instructional needs. Such an assessment is generally undertaken when there is some question concerning a student's current placement in instructional materials or the type of instructional emphasis that would enable the student to make better progress. For the most part these questions arise when a student is not performing well during daily lessons. But they should also arise when a student is performing extremely well. For instructional materials should be neither so difficult that the student can have little success with them nor so easy as to require little thought or attentional effort. Thus, the student who is always able to answer the teacher's questions may need more challenging materials, while the student who can seldom answer questions correctly may need less demanding ones. Teachers must make every effort to see that instructional materials are optimal from this point of view.

## Helping the Talented and Gifted Learner

Too frequently, the talented and gifted learner has been held to his present grade level in achievement in the social studies. Thus, a lack of a challenging, interesting learning environment is in evidence for these pupils. A lack of motivation then becomes apparent on the part of talented and gifted, generally making for situations where underachievement may ultimately be in evidence.

Talented and gifted learners may develop written reports and present their finding to the class. Purpose should be involved in developing these reports as well as in presenting the findings to

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[9] Rebecca Barr and Marilyn Sadow. Reading Diagnosis for Teachers. White Plains, N.Y.: Longman, Inc., 1985, page 143.

classmates. These reports could relate to important questions or problems that have been raised by the talented and gifted in ongoing social studies units.

Skills in using the card catalog in the centralized library may be developed to locate textbooks, library books, and other reading material which are of a more complex reading level as compared to the reading materials of the present grade level these talented and gifted pupils are in. These reading materials, however, must be on the understanding level of talented and gifted learners, and may be used to gain content to solve important problems.

The centralized library should have several reputable daily newspapers for talented and gifted learners to use to stay informed in the current affairs arena. Special group sessions could be conducted for these learners to share ideas on current affairs. Skills in effective participation in group situations may be emphasized at this point. Magazines which cover state, national, and international news should also be a part of the centralized library. These materials may further challenge the talented and gifted learner.

Many of the above reading materials can be utilized in teaching pupils of average achievement in reading. The slow learner may benefit from some of these reading materials, such as studying pictures as well as selected related abstract words from a reputable newsmagazine and daily newspaper. Pupils should be guided to realize their optimum achievement regardless of capacity and achievement levels.

## Reading Activities and the Encyclopedia

Many mistakes have been made in teaching by having pupils develop an excessive number of written reports using encyclopedias to obtain background information. Too frequently content read from encyclopedias has been excessively complex for puils to understand thus causing situations in which pupils have copied statements word for word in developing written reports. If this information is shared with other puils in the class, the presenter may mispronounce words and ask the teacher for the correct pronunciation of other words. Listeners may soon turn off. If pupils are to develop written reports using encyclopedias, the material should be on the reading level of the child. If the content in the encyclopedia is too difficult to read, the pupil should be permitted to use other reference sources which are meaningful in developing a report. Library books, slides, films, filmstrips, and interviews may provide a better basis for developing written reports as compared to the use of encyclopedias for selected learners.

Talented and gifted pupils who read well can benefit much from developing reports from the use of encyclopedias. Prior to reading from this reference source, a purpose should exist in the mind of the learner for this learning activity; thus there should be reasons for developing the report. The social studies teacher may have a purpose for the pupil to complete a written report; however, it is important for the learner to accept the purpose as his or her own. The teacher should think of approaches to utilize in teaching and learning which guide pupils in wanting intrinsically to develop reports. Generally, the findings of a

pupil or a committee pertaining to the written report are presented to other members in the class. This necessitates having the necessary information well in mind on the part of the presenter. Pupils need to be able to write acceptable outlines covering the content of the report which is to be presented to listeners in the class setting. In using the outline, ideas in the report can be presented using proper sequence. A child who might forget selected content when presenting the report to the class may look at the outline. Sometimes, pupils have used the outline excessively by directly reading parts of it orally. Practice is needed to develop confidence in oneself when appearing before the class and in utilizing an outline effectively in conveying ideas to others.

Pupils will vary much from each other in achievement when developing a report and presenting their findings to the class. It is important for each pupil to know where improvements may be made in the reporting arena. The teacher and pupils cooperatively should diagnose these weaknesses. Pupils may determine their own deficiencies through self-evaluation when listening to their recorded voices and seeing themselves on videotape. Self-evaluation may be one of the better techniques to utilize in guiding learners toward improved performance. When pupils' voices are recorded as a means of evaluating achievement, respect for all pupils in a class is important. Each pupil is at a different level of achievement whether it is in the area of reading or in the giving of oral reports. Ridiculing a child's present level of performance can only assist in making negative attitudes on the part of involved learners. Each pupil should be assisted and guided in improving his or her past performance. A pupil should not be evaluated

against the performance of other children since the comparisons may be grossly unfair. When working toward improvement, it is important to have realistic standards in mind. Pupils may not try to achieve if the objectives are too difficult to realize. They may feel a lack of challenge and become bored if the standards are too low. Objectives that each pupil is to realize should be attainable.

One further generalization dealing with the use of encyclopedias is that these books should be used along with other reference sources when pupils engage in problem solving activities in a modern social studies curriculum.

There are additional ways to evaluate pupil achievement in the area of reading. A pupil or a committee having read content pertaining to people living along the Amazon River may develop a diorama portraying this scene. Careful planning would go into the development of the diorama. Accuracy in the presentation is important. The pupil or committee also needs to determine necessary materials to use in completing the diorama. Criteria may be developed to evaluate the final product. The pupil or committee should definitely be involved in determining the strengths and weaknesses of the completed diorama.

After having completed reading a library book or a selection from an encyclopedia on local government, for example, a frieze may be developed to reveal comprehension. Prior to developing the frieze, it is important to plan which scenes should become a part of the total learning activity. The county court house with its various offices as well as the city hall with its different departments could become a part of the frieze. All members on the committee should have important

responsibilities in developing the frieze. As the frieze is being developed, pupils will realize, no doubt, that additional information is needed to answer questions that have arisen as a result of pupils involvement. Further reading may then be necessary to answer these questions. Pupils should have numerous opportunities to evaluate their own contributions in developing the frieze. The teacher also may evaluate each pupil's improvement over previous performance in terms of interest, purpose, responsibility, involvement, and cooperation. Each child should contribute optimally in developing the frieze.

Pupils individually or in committees may develop puppets or marionettes relating to ideas having been read from an encyclopedia or from selections in a social studies textbook. If stick puppets are decided upon to be used in presenting major ideas from a reading activity, pupils with teacher guidance need to decide upon which characters need to be made. A creative presentation may be given by pupils portraying individuals represented by the stick puppets. Definite planned parts may be formulated by pupils prior to or when playing roles represented by these puppets. Stimulation of pupil interest is important in teaching social studies. Learning activities selected must spur pupils on to greater efforts. Pupils should have an inward desire in wanting to make puppets as well as use them to represent real people in different units of study. Judging the effectiveness of these presentations is important. Out of this learning activity pupils should develop desirable understandings, skills, and attitudes. Learners who have had a tendency to turn off frequently in

learning activities involving the social studies may become fascinated with the use of marionettes and puppets in ongoing units of study.

There are many other approaches the creative teacher can utilize to assist pupils in using understandings obtained through reading such as developing drawings, making maps and globes, and constructing objects.

Ediger[9] wrote:

> A quality teacher is a proficient evaluator of learner progress. A variety of appraisal procedures needs to be utilized. Among other evaluation techniques, the following may be utilized:
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> 1. Teacher observation
> 2. Anecdotal records
> 3. Sociometric devices
> 4. Teacher written tests
> 5. Checklists and rating scales
> 6. Standardized achievement tests
> 7. Personality tests
> 8. Interest inventories
> 9. Criterion referenced tests
> 10. Self-evaluation by the learner

Problems for Consideration and Discussion

1. In your own thinking, why do selected pupils have difficulty in reading content in the social studies?
2. Interview two or three classroom teachers to determine what problems they face in having pupils read content in the social studies.
3. Conduct an interview with a remedial reading teacher to assess difficulties pupils are having with reading in the social studies.

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[9] Marlow Ediger, "Goals in the Reading Curriculum," Reading Improvement, 21 (Fall, 1984), 243.

4. How would you guide pupils in developing readiness for reading in the social studies?

5. What would you do as a teacher of social studies to help pupils gain adequate background knowledge for reading when these learners come from homes which generally have not provided a rich learning environment?

6. Visit a classroom and observe pupils responding to questions involving a variety of purposes in reading social studies content.

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